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DRAFT REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN AND THE PROGRAMME BUDGET ON ITS TWENTY-FIRST SESSION

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
from 31 August to .. September 1992

Rapporteur: Mr. Doss Adly Doss (Egypt)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The twenty-first session of the Working Party on the Medium Term Plan and the Programme Budget was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 31 August to .. September 1992.

2. In the course of the session, .. plenary meetings were held. This report gives a short account of the proceedings of those meetings.

Opening statement

3. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD said that the review by the Working Party of the draft revisions of the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1992-1997 would be taking place on the eve of the consideration by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) of these and other proposed revisions of the plan. The text before the Working Party was the unedited version of the text that would be submitted to CPC.

4. With regard to document A/47/6 (Prog. 15), the text contained some additional proposals for revisions arising from the results of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Paris in September 1990, as well as some proposed revisions arising from the outcome of UNCTAD VIII.

5. Programmes 13 and 14, as contained in documents A/47/6 (Prog. 13) and (Prog. 14), had been substantially revised in order to integrate into the medium-term plan - the principal policy directive of the United Nations - the major decisions taken by UNCTAD VIII concerning the substantive reorientation and institutional adaptation of the work of UNCTAD. UNCTAD VIII had confirmed and extended UNCTAD's mandate, giving salience and developing new common approaches to long-standing trade and development problems and related new and emerging issues. Further, the Conference had agreed on a comprehensive reorientation of the substantive work of UNCTAD, in effect delineating the scope of UNCTAD's activities in the coming quadrennium on the basis of four major themes: a new international partnership for development, global interdependence, paths to development, and sustainable development. The rationale and structure of programmes 13 and 14 were in fact based on those four themes and the issues highlighted therein.

6. Further, the substance of programmes 13 and 14, with the exception of the ITC subprogrammes included in programme 14, had been drawn from the results of UNCTAD VIII, as contained in "A New Partnership for Development: The Cartagena Commitment" (TD(VIII)/Misc.4), as well as from the terms of reference established by the Board in its decision 398 (XXXVIII) for the Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups created by UNCTAD VIII. Together, they combined to give a new and enriched policy framework for the work of UNCTAD in the period ahead.

7. Moreover, the four main themes and the issues highlighted therein had also provided a basis for determining priority designations. Thus, a number of subprogrammes corresponding to those issues had been selected for this purpose in such a way as to achieve a certain balance between the four main themes.

8. The new policy agenda was a substantial and rich one that would enable UNCTAD not only to make its own contribution to the intergovernmental consideration of both long-standing and new trade and development issues but also to enhance the practical value of its work to individual Governments and groups of Governments.

9. With regard to item 6 and the question of resources, it was clear from the proposed revisions to UNCTAD sections of the medium-term plan that, further to the results of UNCTAD VIII, UNCTAD found itself having to deal with a wide and extended range of issues. At the same time, it was confronted with a tight resource situation, and the secretariat would need to pay particular attention to the efficient and flexible use of its resources. Further, it would have to ensure that the manner in which it formulated and implemented its work programme would lead to effective support in each main area and not result in resources being spread too thinly over too wide a field. This would call not only for some selectivity but also for a step-by-step approach, where appropriate and possible. For their part, the new Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups would have to establish clear priorities when drawing up their respective work programmes. The secretariat would continue to provide

substantive support for the work of the Board and its subsidiary bodies to undertake research and to issue reports and publications. However, it was expected that, following the Cartagena Conference, government representatives and experts would bring to the debates within UNCTAD substantive elements based on their country experiences.

10. A new proposed organizational structure for the secretariat had in fact been drawn up, with consequential redeployment of staff within the secretariat, in order to meet the requirements of the new work programme and intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD. It was presently under consideration in New York. It was intended to respond to two major considerations, namely (i) to provide for a clear and visible response to the new intergovernmental structures, orientations and tasks established by the Conference and the Board, as well as to the terms of reference of the new Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Working Groups; and (ii) to maximize efficiency and flexibility in the use of existing resources in such a way that in some areas requiring similar skill mixes (such as work on development strategies) collaborative teams and arrangements, rather than strict compartmentalization of activities, would be the norm.

11. UNCTAD's technical cooperation activities were designed to support national capacity-building in beneficiary countries, to promote cooperation among developing countries and to enhance international cooperation for development. The period under review, 1989-1991, had been a time of rapid

expansion, then consolidation, in the programme as a whole. Several new initiatives had been launched, but most importantly, technical cooperation was now more firmly integrated in the work of the secretariat.

12. The approach of integrating technical cooperation and the regular work of the secretariat had been strongly supported by member States at UNCTAD VIII. Although integration had not been achieved in all programme areas, progress had generally been good. Certain analytical or research subjects did not naturally lend themselves to specific technical cooperation projects, but the reverse should never hold; care should be exercised not to initiate or undertake operational activities unsupported by significant analytical or technical backstopping from the secretariat.

13. However, extrabudgetary contributions for research and analysis that fell under the rubric of technical cooperation could help to introduce new ideas and concepts into both the regular and the operational work of the secretariat, as demonstrated by studies on the implementation of Paris Club agreements, trade policy reform or tradeable carbon emission entitlements. It was through this process that the alleged dichotomy between research and analysis and technical cooperation could be resolved.

14. The integration of operational activities with the secretariat's regular work also imparted a degree of specificity and comparative advantage to UNCTAD's technical cooperation. This in turn enabled UNCTAD to direct its technical cooperation around a distinct number of specific - and marketable

products and services. Such specificity facilitated the coordination of its activities with relevant programmes of other organizations working in the same area. Examples included UNCTAD's collaboration with the World Bank as regards debt management and the extensive cooperation between ASYCUDA and several other international organizations. It also enabled donors, who increasingly searched for "centres of excellence", to appreciate the significance of support to developing countries through UNCTAD's programmes.

15. Activities in 1992 would show a decline over those in 1991, due entirely to the traditional drop in funding from UNDP at the beginning of a new five year UNDP programming cycle. However, this drop in UNDP's support for UNCTAD's technical cooperation might this time continue inasmuch as resources available to UNDP's regional programmes that had consistently supported activities for trade and economic cooperation had been substantially reduced in the new UNDP cycle. UNCTAD was likely to be particularly affected as regards its regional activities in Africa.

16. As requested by the Working Party, the secretariat would continue to diversify sources of support for UNCTAD's technical cooperation. However, development aid programmes remained constrained by overall public expenditure limits in donor countries and by the appeal for urgent humanitarian relief programmes. Nevertheless, UNCTAD VIII's strong support for technical cooperation could be marshalled by emphasizing the proven track record and the promise of several of UNCTAD's more imaginative programmes.

17. The UNCTAD secretariat expressed its deep appreciation for the support of all those many donors who had been able to maintain and sometimes increase their contributions. A considerable number of OECD countries, and developing countries as well, contributed in one form or another. Particular mention should be made of Italy and the Netherlands for providing an annual overall contribution allocated to mutually agreed priority projects. Similar arrangements with other donors would be welcomed. Further, there were good prospects of additional funding through cooperation with the Commission of the European Communities and other sources, including the World Bank and the regional development banks.

18. With regard to coordinating UNCTAD's technical cooperation with relevant activities of other organizations, good progress had been made in this regard. UNCTAD fully supported and relied heavily on UNDP, especially to ensure coordination at the country level. Relations at the operational level with ITC were particularly important, and although there had been some progress, there was no doubt that both beneficiary countries and donors would benefit from greater operational synergy between the two organizations in such areas as trade information, training and human resource development and trade policy advice linked to trade promotion activities.

19. The period under review had also seen an increase in the number of potential beneficiaries of UNCTAD's technical cooperation as a result of the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

UNCTAD had done its best to respond to those specific requests for assistance within its competence on the basis of additional financial resources, and it would continue to do so.

20. The Cartagena Conference had requested the Board to undertake, midway between Conferences, a policy review of UNCTAD's technical cooperation. The present session of the Working Party could help to arrange for such a review, by indicating any particular matters it would wish to see included in the secretariat's next biennial report on technical cooperation.

21. With regard to programme evaluation, the report before the Working Party (TD/B/WP/77) reviewed the development of the evaluation process in UNCTAD and discussed future activities and orientations arising from the results of UNCTAD VIII, including the review of work programmes to be undertaken by the Board midway between Conferences. At the first part of the thirty-second session of CPC, held in May 1992, the Joint Inspection Unit had again praised UNCTAD for its practice of reporting its evaluation findings to member States of UNCTAD. The CPC had decided that the findings from self-evaluation studies should be reported by programme managers to their respective governing bodies and that such reports should be placed on the agendas of the specialized governing bodies.

Chapter I

REVIEW OF THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES OF UNCTAD AND THEIR FINANCING

(Agenda item 3)

22. For its consideration of this item, the Working Party had before it the following documentation:

"Technical cooperation programme of UNCTAD, 1989-1991: report by the UNCTAD secretariat" (TD/B/WP/76 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and Corr.1).

[To be completed]

Chapter II

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD ON THE WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT ON PROGRAMME EVALUATION

(Agenda item 4)

23. For its consideration of this item, the Working Party had before it the following documentation:

"Programme evaluation in UNCTAD: report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD" (TD/B/WP/77).

[To be completed]

Chapter III

REVIEW OF DRAFT REVISIONS TO THE UNCTAD SECTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR 1992-1997

(Agenda item 5)

24. For its consideration of this item, the Working Party had before it the following documentation:

"Review of the draft revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations medium-term plan for 1992-1997" (TD/B/WP/79);

"Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997" (A/47/6 (Prog. 13, 14 and 15)).

[To be completed]

Chapter IV

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH 4 OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ADOPTED BY THE WORKING PARTY AT ITS NINTH SESSION

(Agenda item 6)

[To be completed]

Chapter V

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

(a) Opening of the session

25. The twenty-first session of the Working Party was opened on 31 August 1992 by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

(b) Election of officers
(Agenda item 1)

26. At its 97th (opening) plenary meeting, on 31 August 1992, the Working Party elected Mr. Leslie B. Gatan (Philippines) as its Chairman and Mr. Doss Adly Doss (Egypt) as its Vice-Chairman-cum-Rapporteur.

(c) Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
(Agenda item 2)

27. Also at its 97th meeting, the Working Party adopted the provisional agenda approved at the Consultations of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on 17 July 1992 (TD/B/WP/75), as follows:

1. Election of officers

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

4. Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the work of the secretariat on programme evaluation

5. Review of draft revisions to the UNCTAD sections of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for 1992-1997

6. Report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD pursuant to paragraph 4 of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Working Party at its ninth session

7. Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Working Party

8. Other business

9. Adoption of the report of the Working party to the Trade and Development Board

28. With regard to the organization of work, after hearing the opening statement by the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD (see introduction above), the Working Party decided to meet as an informal working group to consider agenda items 3, 4, 5 and 6.

(d) Membership and attendance

29. The following States members of the Working Party were represented at the session: Argentina; Australia; Brazil; Bulgaria; China; Egypt; Germany; India; Japan; [Nigeria]; [Norway]; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Russian Federation; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United Republic of Tanzania; United States of America; [Yugoslavia].

30. The following other States members of UNCTAD, not members of the Working Party, were represented at the session: Algeria; Austria; Burundi; Chile; Equatorial Guinea; France; Hungary; Italy; Jordan; Lebanon; Mexico; Nepal; Niger; Pakistan; Portugal; Senegal; Singapore; Sri Lanka.

31. Palestine participated pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX).

32. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD-GATT was represented at the session.

33. The following specialized agencies were represented at the session: World Bank; United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

34. The following intergovernmental organization was represented at the session: Organization of African Unity.

(e) Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Working Party

[To be completed]

(f) Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

[To be completed]